

FIRST SOVIET EXPERIMENT

in October, 1921, to the arrest and execution of Haidar Khan by Kuchik Khan. The latter, while ready to distribute land evenly among the people, was unwilling to deprive former owners of their possessions completely and in the name of justice advocated the restoration of parts of confiscated estates. Yet, despite these differences, the extreme point of view triumphed wherever Soviet troops and agents were present. Besides, Kuchik Khan owed much to the Russians: their arms and instructors permitted him to continue in control of Gilan even though at the same time they limited his freedom of action. The Iranian government viewed these events with great concern, because the presence of Soviet troops in the area signified something more than a military occupation as a safeguard against possible new British intervention. The Bolsheviks were bent upon the forcible change of the economic and social structure of Iran's Caspian provinces, and the hasty proclamation of Soviet institutions did not augur well for a speedy evacuation of Soviet troops. Moreover, it was difficult even to discuss these matters with Moscow owing to its stubborn pretense that the blame, if any, should be put on "independent" Soviet Azerbaijan. The conclusion of the Soviet-Iranian Treaty in February, 1931, did not influence the Gilan situation immediately. Unfortunately for Iran, the British, who had long before resolved to quit that country, were slow in removing their few remaining troops and did not withdraw their last detachments until May, 1921. The British delay gave the Bolsheviks an excuse to continue their rule around the Caspian. Even the withdrawal of British troops did not bring any direct easing of the

situation, and
in June, 1921, Kuchik Khan's forces, reinforced by
some Soviet ele-
ments from Georgia, began to march on Teheran. As
late as July
new Soviet contingents landed at Enzeli. The Iranian
Cossack Divi-
sion was trying to hold the rebel and Soviet forces in
check. Ulti-
mately, following repeated Iranian protests, Soviet
troops were with-
drawn on September 8, 1921. Then the Iranian army
could proceed,
unimpeded, to restore order in Gilan. The energetic
leadership of
Reza Khan gave the army the impetus that it had so
sadly lacked in
wartime; by October the rebellion of Kuchik Khan was
brought to an
end. Kuchik himself was captured and executed; his
head was brought
to Teheran. The whole Jangali episode ended
ignominiously and